

President Kim, it is with great admiration for you and for the people of Korea that I invite everyone here to join me in a toast to you and to the Republic of Korea. May democracy continue to flourish there, and may the dream of peaceful reunification on the Korean Peninsula soon become a reality.

To President and Mrs. Kim and the people of the Republic of Korea. Hear, hear.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:38 p.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters at the Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation Ceremony November 24, 1993

The President. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen and boys and girls. It's good to see you here. I want to especially thank Congresswoman Leslie Byrne for joining us, along with Stuart Proctor, the National Turkey Federation president, and the turkey, clapping for the president—[*laughter*—Thomas Bross, the chairman of the federation and a turkey farmer from Pennsylvania who raised this year's Thanksgiving turkey, and the National Turkey Federation staff. Finally, I want to welcome the fourth-grade students who are here from Springfield Estates Elementary School in Springfield, Virginia. Welcome to all of you. I'm glad you're here for Thanksgiving.

As President, this is my first year to have the honor of accepting the annual Thanksgiving turkey and granting the turkey the annual Presidential pardon. [*Laughter*] After this ceremony, this turkey will retire to a 1930's working farm replica in Northern Virginia.

We've come together today to have a little fun but also to express our gratitude in this Thanksgiving season for God's many blessings, a time to impress upon younger people the heritage of our Nation and the commitment we all have to justice and freedom and peace.

It's also a time to reach out in service to others not as fortunate as we are. In a few hours, Hillary and I will visit the new Covenant Baptist Church here in Washington where church members and homeless families are coming together to prepare a Thanksgiving dinner. Thanksgiving, when we all bask in the generosity and hospitality of our own family and friends, reminds us that we also belong to a larger community full of people who often are not as fortunate as we are.

It's a time to value those things and to remember how strong we are when we come to-

gether to overcome adversity. In the last few months I've had a chance to spend a lot of time in the Middle West, dealing with the floods and their aftermath, and then last Sunday I went to church in California with two dozen people who went through the horrible trauma of the wildfires in the West. And I saw again what people can do when they pull together and remember that we are all in this together.

Tomorrow, I'll have the great good fortune of celebrating Thanksgiving with my family, reflecting on the past year and looking to the future. I'll have the chance to say a prayer of thanks for the many blessings that I have enjoyed. I ask all of you to do that. I wish you well on this Thanksgiving and to remember also our continuing obligations for our fellow Americans who don't have many of the things we take for granted. Together we can make this country stronger and have even more to be thankful for next Thanksgiving.

Thank you very much. [*Applause*] And thank you for the applause.

Somebody pointed out this morning that this may not be the only turkey I've had in my administration, but this is one I will certainly set free. [*Laughter*]

[*At this point, the President spoke with the children.*]

Turkey Presentation

The President. I'm experienced in this. I come from the fourth largest turkey-growing State in the country.

Q. Is this your first Presidential pardon?

The President. It is my first Presidential pardon.

Q. You're going into great detail over this—

[inaudible]

The President. Yes, we were talking to the kids about the turkey. This is a very well behaved turkey.

Q. We were hoping for something better, actually.

The President. I asked the gentleman who raised him, you know, if they went to any trouble, any extra effort to raise him, and he said that they had spent a lot of time handling him, so he's more comfortable around people.

Q. Were you concerned at all about this, because this has some ridiculous aspects for a President—

The President. So many of my predecessors have participated in this—[inaudible]. I actually didn't mind it. I think it's kind of funny, and it's an annual ritual. As I said, it's a little easier for me because I've been around turkeys all my life. I didn't mean it like that—[laughter]—and I come from a State that grows a lot of turkeys. We also have a huge wild turkey population at home, too, so it's not as alien an experience for me as it would be for some people.

Q. Do you think the Founding Fathers made the right choice not choosing a turkey as the national bird?

Q. You know Franklin proposed it. He really did.

The President. Yes, he did. Well, actually, let me tell you—but what Franklin meant—wild turkeys, and they're quite beautiful, if you've ever seen them. They're bottom heavy, like a regular turkey, but they're quite beautiful. And they can go from zero to 35 miles an hour in no time, something most people don't know, an amazing creature to see operate in the woods. And being out there in the woods on an early November or December morning, listening to the turkeys, actually, in our State, it's turkey season earlier.

Q. Does this remind you of any of the Members of Congress you've been dealing with in the last—[laughter]—

Q. Speaking of that, what's the latest—

Handgun Control Legislation

Q. What's the latest on the Brady bill?

The President. I don't know. Senator Mitchell has put a very, I think, good offer on the table. He has offered, with my strong support, to put in a separate bill as soon as they come back, several provisions of the Brady bill that we don't think would weaken the bill that Senator Dole

wanted, one of which deals with the automation of records and when that could supplant the waiting period, when the records are automated, that 67 Senators voted for before, including Senator Dole. One deals with giving them what they wanted, which was a 4-year instead of 5-year time period, with an extra year it could be extended at the Attorney General's discretion. And I think there's another change in there. Senator Mitchell has gone the extra mile, and I have authorized him to say that I will strongly support the legislation so that it would permit the Senate Republicans to give up on the filibuster and send the Brady bill to us now and we could give it to the American people for Thanksgiving. That's what I think they ought to do, but we'll just have to see. I certainly hope they—

Q. Why do you think the Republicans are so adamant?

The President. I don't know. I think they're just—[inaudible]. I don't know. People who don't want the bill are holding it hostage. We should have done this long ago. It's an important first step in trying to get ahold of gun violence in this country and make our streets safer and enable our police officers to do their jobs better. And we now have the support of 80 percent of the American people and a big majority in the Senate. We know we have over 60 Senators prepared to vote for this bill, but the political gridlock is holding one more than 40 of them. In the filibuster system, you know, 41 percent of the Senate can prevent a bill from coming to a vote. I think it's a terrible mistake, and I hope we can break out of it today.

Q. What kind of a political price are the Republicans going to pay for this, after citing the statistics they used—

The President. Well, I think the American people want us to act. I think they do not want this to be a partisan political issue. I think the safety of our streets has become also a national security issue. I think the American people want us to act. And I don't want to make it a partisan issue. I have bent over backwards not to. I want to work with the Republicans on the crime bill. I want to put another 100,000 police officers on the street. I want that assault weapons ban. I don't think it ought to be a partisan issue. But their partisan filibuster is making it a partisan issue, and I think that it's a mistake for them to do it. But we're going to keep working as hard as we can. I still think we've got a

chance to get it done, and I hope that the American people will be supportive. I know they are; that's what they're hearing out there. We've just got to keep on plugging.

Q. Hasn't it become personal, also, Mr. President? Senator Dole thinks he was sandbagged by the Democrats.

The President. Well, I know he thinks that, and I don't want to get into this, because I can't—I mean, he says that, but this has nothing to do with the underlying merits. This is either a good bill or not a good bill, number one. Number two, the Republicans on the conference committee were not even on the regular committee, and they were people who had no intention of voting for the Brady bill if all the changes they wanted were adopted. So the Democrats argued that they felt that they didn't

know what they were supposed to talk about with people who weren't going to vote for it regardless and who weren't even on the committee that had jurisdiction of the Brady bill. So you can hear arguments on both sides about that, but that's irrelevant, that's irrelevant.

This is a good thing for the American people. It's a good first step. It's the right thing to do. If you stay around these battles now, and you've been through all of the stuff we've been through just in the last year, all of us—if you go around letting your personal feelings get in the way of doing the public interest, we'd never get anything done around here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:36 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House.

Remarks at the Covenant Baptist Church November 24, 1993

The President. Thank you. First of all, let me say to you, Pastor, and to the whole staff and family of Covenant Baptist Church, I thank you for taking us in here and letting us be a part of what Hillary and I have always done at Thanksgiving, being a part of some ministry to take Thanksgiving to people who would otherwise not have it. I want to also thank the Coalition for the Homeless that's working with you for the work that they have done to try to turn homelessness into a temporary condition by moving people through shelters into having the skills and the strength and the power to take control of their own lives.

I think it's important that the people of America know, all the people of America know, that in our cities where people have many problems, most of the people who live there are good, God-fearing, law-abiding, hard-working people who are doing things like this to help their friends and neighbors and who want things to work better.

So my commitment to you is to do what I can as President to help you succeed here, in your church and on your streets. And I hope that all Americans on this Thanksgiving, including many Americans like me and Hillary and our family who have more than they could ever

have asked for, will take some time out to work, as you are working, so that other people who don't have so much can also have something to be thankful for on Thanksgiving and throughout the year.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

[At this point, the President and Hillary Clinton were presented with T-shirts.]

The President. Let me say one other thing, Reverend Wiley. I like this church also because you've got a husband and wife team here who are both pastors, both pastors of this church, and making this thing work as a family, along with your distinguished father who preceded you in the pulpit. Reverend Wiley, it's good to see you. And we like to see people working together like this and all of you doing that. I appreciate it and respect it very much. Thank you for your service and your ministry. I'll wear this jogging. Thank you.

Handgun Control Legislation

Q. Mr. President, did you get a deal on the Brady bill?

The President. It looks like the Brady bill is going to be passed any minute, and I am very happy. Right before I left to come over here, it appeared that an agreement could be